Focus on Inquiry:

A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-based Learning

January 2004 Draft

Alberta LEARNING

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This document is intended for:

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Teachers	✓
Administrators	
Parents	
General Public	
Other	

Acknowledgements

Foreword

This document is an update of *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills* (Alberta Education, 1990). *Focus on Research* was developed in response to suggestions from Alberta teachers during the implementation of *Focus on Learning: An Integrated Program Model for Alberta School Libraries* (Alberta Education, 1985).

Research, as well as suggestions from teachers and teacher–librarians, indicated that it was time to enhance and rethink the 1990 research process model. Although the essential elements of the *Focus on Research* model are strong, changes in curriculum, students, professional development, research findings, and the world of work all point to the timeliness of this update. Additionally, research and practice point to a need for a deeper consideration of the implications of technology and the implications of the affective nature of inquiry-based learning.

With the support from teachers and teacher–librarians across the province, this update brings together 13 years of research, practice and reflection. The work has also been supported by colleagues in school librarianship education and research around the world.

How can I use this document?

Inquiry-based learning is not an "add-on," but rather a way to achieve the goals of the Alberta programs of study, since inquiry-based learning is a component of all Alberta curricula. This document provides supports for implementing inquiry-based learning activities in the classroom and is intended for teachers working on their own or in teams, with or without the support of a teacher–librarian or other library personnel. It provides an instructional model that can be used by all teachers, Kindergarten to Grade 12, in guiding inquiry with students.

Inquiry-based learning activities can be used in various ways to accomplish the learning outcomes of Alberta programs of study:
- within core programs
- within optional programs
- across two or more curriculum areas
- integrated with the Information and Communication Technology curriculum.

Contents

Chapter 1: Building a Culture of Inquiry

Think back to your own experiences in school. Do you remember your favourite project?   What was your topic? How did you share your information? What made the experience so special?

This kind of learning remains a strong and compelling memory for those of us lucky enough to have experienced a self-directed project (today called inquiry-based learning). The feelings are the same whether we experienced this in the early elementary grades, as a high school student, or as a graduate student. Many of us, when asked about a positive memory of school, will remember a project that engaged our thinking and learning. Often, it was a research project that we shared with friends and family.

Some teachers have not had the experience of a research project in their own schooling, but have taken up the challenge of creating inquiry-based learning experiences for students and are aware of the wonder and excitement a research project can bring to learning.

What is inquiry-based learning?

Inquiry-based learning is a process where students formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge. That knowledge is new to the students and may be used to answer a question, to develop a solution or to support a position or point of view. The knowledge is usually presented to others and may result in some sort of action.

What does the research say?

Inquiry-based learning improves student achievement. Some of the research on this effect comes from the school library field. School library programs, properly equipped and staffed, can make a difference in terms of measurable gains in student achievement. School library factors alone can account for improvements of 2% to 9% in student achievement (Lance, 2001). In combination with other factors, such as teacher efficacy and teacher learning opportunities, school library programs can help to achieve even greater gains in student achievement. The leadership role of the teacher–librarian, when focused on teacher learning and on other factors related to increased student performance, can contribute to increased gains in student achievement.

Research also suggests that using inquiry-based learning with students can help them become more creative, more positive and more independent (Kühne, 1995). This is true for all students, including those with special needs, who require more individual attention during the process.

Success with inquiry-based learning often requires a change in school culture. Some schools, individually or as part of a district-wide initiative, have made inquiry-based learning their instructional priority. Studies investigating the implementation of inquiry-based science education, of inquiry-based information literacy programs, and of other inquiry-based educational innovations, have resulted in guidelines for building a culture of inquiry (Falk & Drayton, 2001; Fullan, 1991; Kuhlthau, 2001):

- Administrators in the school or district have a clearly articulated vision for inquiry.
- The vision for inquiry is carried forward despite competing pressures.
- Two or more champions promote the vision for inquiry.
- Resources and space for inquiry are readily accessible.
- Teachers collaborate and support each other.
- Teachers, students and parents trust each other.
- Small, interdisciplinary teams of teachers work together.
- Problem-solving and investigative skills are valued throughout the school/school system.

Inquiry and metacognition

Building a culture of inquiry also means recognizing, supporting and teaching the role of metacognition. In the inquiry process, metacognition means becoming aware of one's own thinking processes (thinking about thinking) and acknowledging and understanding the feelings associated with each of the phases. Metacognitive skills are part of the "learning to learn" skills that are transferable to new learning situations, in school and out of school. Through reflecting on the process during inquiry-based learning activities, students are given opportunities to explore and understand both the cognitive and affective domains of "learning to learn" (Hacker, 1999; Kuhlthau, 1988). Understanding and dealing with thoughts and feelings makes inquiry-based learning a powerful learning experience for students and teachers.

Inquiry across the curriculum	The model for inquiry-based learning presented in this document is one that can be used in all programs of study and in all grades. Inquiry-based learning is embedded in all Alberta curricula. Although different terminology and process emphases are used in the different curricula, this document emphasizes common aspects or elements and supports an integrated, cross-disciplinary approach to inquiry. Using an inquiry model helps students to internalize a process for inquiry that is transferable to everyday life situations.
A systematic approach to inquiry	Inquiry-based learning provides opportunities for students to: • develop skills they will need all their lives • learn to cope with problems that may not have clear solutions • deal with changes and challenges to understandings • shape their search for solutions, now and in the future. A systematic approach to the development of these skills is essential to prepare students for problem solving and lifelong learning. A systematic approach ensures that students have the opportunity to engage in inquiry, to learn an overall process and to understand that this general inquiry process can be transferred to other inquiry situations. Using these same process skills as they proceed from primary grades through senior high school will enable students to: • become familiar with the inquiry process • understand a framework that supports searching for information • internalize a variety of inquiry skills and strategies for independent and group use • adapt procedures to various inquiry situations (adapted from Alberta Education, 1990, p. 9).
Characteristics of classrooms using the inquiry process successfully	Classrooms where teachers emphasize inquiry-based learning have the following characteristics (Drayton & Falk, 2001): • Inquiry is in the form of authentic problems within the context of the curriculum and/or community. • The inquiry capitalizes on student curiosity. • Data and information are actively used, interpreted, refined, digested and discussed. • Teacher, students and teacher–librarian collaborate. • Community and society are connected with the inquiry. • The teacher visibly models the behaviours of inquirer. • The teacher uses the language of inquiry on an ongoing basis.

- Students take ownership of their learning.
- The teacher facilitates the process of gathering and presenting information.
- The teacher and students use technology to advance inquiry.
- The teacher embraces inquiry as both content and pedagogy.
- The teacher and students interact more frequently and more actively than during traditional teaching.
- There is an identifiable time for inquiry-based learning.

Definitions

Many other terms are used synonymously or in relationship with inquiry and inquiry-based learning: research, resource-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, authentic learning, active learning and information literacy. The following definitions should help to clarify the meanings of these terms:

Active learning
Active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991) involves students creating new knowledge, often working in collaboration with other students. The emphasis is on using higher order thinking skills during active investigation and reflection. Teachers are co-learners and facilitators in the learning process.

Authentic learning
Authentic learning (Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1995) involves going beyond active learning to challenge and solve complex problems and construct new meaning that is grounded in real-world experience. Students are challenged to create new knowledge, to answer a question, to develop a solution or to support a position or point of view based on real-world problems.

Information literacy
Information literacy involves the ability to access, evaluate and use information from a variety of resources; to recognize when information is needed; and to know how to learn (American Library Association, 1989).

The new national standards document from the Canadian School Library Association and the Association for Teacher–Librarianship in Canada, *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada*, identifies eight student information literacy outcomes that will assist students as they prepare themselves with the knowledge and skills they will require for a lifetime of learning (Asselin, Branch & Oberg, 2003):
- Students will demonstrate an appreciation of the creative arts, literature, various media formats and other aesthetic representations, and a value for lifelong learning.

- Students will use information responsibly and ethically for individual and collaborative learning activities.
- Students will use information from diverse perspectives and values with respect.
- Students will use information critically to evaluate the relevance, authenticity, and validity of information and its source.
- Students will use information strategically to process, organize, and filter information to meet an individual or collaborative learning need.
- Students will consciously use information for making personal and group learning decisions.
- Students will use information expressively to modify, revise, and transform information and to communicate their newly created information with an intended audience.
- Students will demonstrate competence and proficiency in the technical uses of traditional and digital information and media tools.

Problem-based learning

Problem-based learning (Schroeder, 2001) begins with an open-ended, real-world problem with more than one possible solution. The emphasis is on gaining the content knowledge that is needed to solve the problem. The problem may have as its focus a dilemma to be confronted, a decision to be made, an issue to be resolved, a policy to be debated or a new product or service to be developed.

Project-based learning

Project-based learning begins with the student's own interests and questions. Learning activities are long-term, interdisciplinary and student-centred and are integrated with real-world issues and practices. Students are involved in making decisions about how they will find answers and solve problems.

Research

Research is a process that seeks an answer to a question or a curiosity. It involves close, careful and systematic study and is often used to refer to scholarly or scientific investigation or inquiry.

Resource-based learning

Resource-based learning (Beswick, 1977; Saskatchewan Education, 1987) actively involves students in the meaningful use of a wide range of appropriate print, nonprint, digital and human resources.
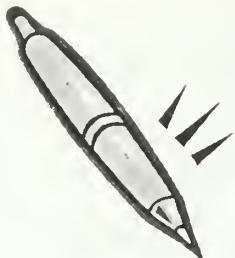
TIPS for Teachers: Building a Culture of Inquiry
- Approach inquiry with enthusiasm and excitement.
- Admit that inquiry involves the unexpected for teacher and students.
- Model the inquiry process in your instruction (show as well as tell).
- Use the language of inquiry.
- Post the Inquiry Model in your classroom and the school library.
- Facilitate the process—discuss, clarify, support and monitor.
- Evaluate the process (and make it really count).
- Use technology to do what would be impossible otherwise.
- Set a specific time for inquiry-based learning.

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Chapter 2: A Model for Inquiry

What happened to the 1990 research process model?

The research process as presented in *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills* (Alberta Education, 1990) is alive and well. The Inquiry Model presented here is an update of *Focus on Research* and was developed in response to suggestions from Alberta teachers and teacher–librarians. Research on the *Focus on Research* model indicated that the time had come to review the 1990 model.

Although the essential elements of the *Focus on Research* model were and continue to be strong, changes in curriculum, students, professional development, research findings and the world of work all point to the timeliness of this update. Building on the core components of the 1990 model, the Inquiry Model updates and enhances the research process strategies and skills; includes new approaches to the delivery of instruction; and includes implications of technology, new curricula and new research findings on the impact of emotions on learning.

Why is a model useful?

A model is a description or physical representation that increases understanding of something that cannot be directly observed. It is a way of connecting our learnings. Think how much easier it is to understand the workings of the solar system or a DNA molecule when you are able to study a model of these concepts.

An instructional model, such as the Inquiry Model, supports the work of teachers and students and can be used in a variety of ways (Donham, 2001):
- as a scaffold for instruction
- as a gauge for feelings
- as a common language for teachers and students
- as a guide for students
- as a guide for monitoring

The Inquiry Model as a scaffold for instruction.
The Inquiry Model provides the content and structure for instruction—outlining the skills and strategies that need to be taught explicitly in each phase of the process. Referring to the model frequently and consistently during the planning of inquiry-based learning activities keeps instructional concerns in the forefront as lessons are prepared and as instructional materials are created.

The Inquiry Model as a gauge for feelings.

The inquiry process, like any demanding learning experience, brings with it various feelings, including enthusiasm, apprehension, frustration and excitement. These feelings are experienced in a definite pattern in the various phases of the inquiry process. By referring to the model throughout the inquiry-based learning activity, teachers are able to anticipate and recognize when students are experiencing strong feelings and are able to design support systems and reflective activities that help students move through the process. Students need to be taught that these feelings are a normal part of the inquiry process, experienced by all inquirers.

The Inquiry Model as a common language for teachers and students.

A common language for both teachers and students helps students to internalize the model and to talk about the learning processes involved. It increases effective communication among all inquirers in a school since it gives teachers and students the words to talk about the parts of the process. Posting a model in classrooms and in the library (or any place in the school where inquiry learning takes place) encourages students to recognize each phase as part of the whole process.

The Inquiry Model as a guide for students.

The Inquiry Model guides students in using an analytical approach that includes all phases in the inquiry process. Without learning an inquiry process, students often develop a very limited and narrow view of inquiry. They may think that inquiry is finding the answer to other people's questions for the satisfaction of their teacher, rather than understanding inquiry as the process of generating their own questions and using information to satisfy their own interests and to develop their own knowledge.

The Inquiry Model as a guide for monitoring.

Teachers use the Inquiry Model to assess how effectively students have engaged in the inquiry process, how deeply they understand it, and how effectively the process has been sequenced across grades. For example, a matrix that maps the topics of the inquiry-based units and the skills and strategies introduced, developed and extended across the grades, provides a basis for articulation, coordination and ensuring equity. Such a matrix can also be used to balance large and small-scale inquiry activities. Students can get the experience and practice they need in inquiry-based learning without overloading teachers in a particular grade level or subject area.

The Inquiry Model	The Inquiry Model is based on more than 30 years of research from around the world, with thousands of children, adolescents and adults in a variety of inquiry settings, and holds true whether the inquirer is a six-year-old, a senior high school student, an undergraduate student at university, a lawyer, a teacher or a researcher. Some of the key researchers interested in inquiry-based learning are featured in Chapter 13 of this document.

Research shows that inquirers follow a general cognitive and affective pattern. However, the inquiry process is not linear or lock step. It is highly individual, nonlinear, flexible and more recursive than might be suggested in traditional models of the research process. Experienced inquirers tend to do more "looping back" since they are comfortable with the process. Through reflecting on the process, all learners can become comfortable with the nonlinear, individual, flexible and recursive nature of inquiry.

Planning Phase
Inquirers should understand that the underlying purpose of inquiry-based learning projects is to develop their "learning to learn" skills. Inquiry-based learning begins with the inquirers' interest in or curiosity about a topic. For those students with little or no background knowledge of a topic, teachers must provide information and background that motivates students. Students need past experience and knowledge on a topic in order to do productive inquiry. Once students are interested in a broad topic or theme, they need to be involved in determining what questions will be investigated and how they might find the information they need about a particular topic. If the inquirers are going to share their new knowledge with others, they need to consider how to present information to a particular audience. They need to be able to suggest criteria for evaluating their research product and process. At this phase of the inquiry process—the most important phase of the whole process—inquirers often experience a sense of optimism about the tasks ahead.

Retrieving Phase
The inquirers next think about the information they have and the information they want. Teachers often need to help the inquirers to understand that the information that they find, whether in a library book or a newspaper or an Internet site, was created by people with particular beliefs and purposes and that information is not just objective facts. Inquirers may need to spend considerable time exploring and thinking about the information they have found

before they come to a "focus" for their inquiry. This pre-focus phase is at first enjoyable for students, as they actively search for information related to their topic. But as the amount of resources they find increases, students sometimes "tune out" and stop searching, since they may not know how to handle the irrelevant data or cannot find the data specific to their inquiry. Since many students are set in what they want to find out, teachers help students past these feelings of frustration by teaching them that these feelings are part of the inquiry process that all inquirers experience, and by teaching them the skills and strategies for selecting relevant information and for adjusting and modifying inquiries.

Processing Phase
This phase begins when the inquirer has found a "focus" for the inquiry. A focus is the aspect of the topic area that the inquirer decides to investigate. Coming to a focus can be very difficult for students, as it involves more than narrowing the topic. It involves coming to an authentic question, a personal perspective and/or a compelling thesis statement. Inquirers usually experience a sense of relief and elation when they have narrowed down a focus for their inquiry. Even so, choosing pertinent information from resources is often a difficult task; there may be too little information or too much information, or the information may be too superficial or too in-depth for the inquirers. Often the information that is found is confusing and contradictory, so students may feel overwhelmed. Teaching students how to compare, contrast and synthesize data helps them through the disorder that can occur in this phase.

Creating Phase
Organizing the information, putting the information into one's own words and creating a presentation format are the next tasks in the process. Students feel more confident at this phase, and want to include all their new learnings in their product, resulting in too much information. Teachers build on their students' feelings of confidence and teach the skills and strategies that enable students to narrow down or focus their creation.

Sharing Phase
If students have been given enough supports throughout the inquiry process, they are proud of their product and eager to share it, regardless of the format or audience. They may feel a bit nervous about presenting something in which they take such ownership, and they may feel anxious that others may not

understand or appreciate their efforts. Nevertheless, they feel that they have done well on this assignment. Teaching students audience appreciation skills and strategies and focusing on the positive helps to support students through this phase.

Evaluating Phase

Finally, when a research project is complete, inquirers feel relieved and happy. They are excited about their new skills and understandings, and they want to reflect on the evaluation of their product and their inquiry process. In order to make sense of the inquiry process, they need to understand and question the evaluation criteria, to identify the steps in their inquiry process, and to share their feelings about the process.

Students should be able to articulate the importance of this kind of work for developing their "learning to learn" skills, and they should be able to see the connections between their inquiry work done in school and their work or activities that are done outside of school. They should also be able to reflect on how their experience has influenced their personal inquiry model and on what they have learned about themselves as inquirers.

The Inquiry Model

Phase	Skills and Strategies	
Planning	• Identifying a topic area for inquiry • Identifying possible information sources • Identifying audience and presentation format • Establishing evaluation criteria • Outlining a plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process
Retrieving	• Developing an information retrieval plan • Locating and collecting resources • Selecting relevant information • Evaluating information • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process
Processing	• Establishing a focus for inquiry • Choosing pertinent information • Recording information • Making connections and inferences • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process
Creating	• Organizing information • Creating a product • Thinking about the audience • Revising and editing • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process
Sharing	• Communicating with the audience • Presenting new understandings • Demonstrating appropriate audience behaviour	Reflecting on the process
Evaluating	• Evaluating the product • Evaluating the inquiry process and inquiry plan • Reviewing and revising personal inquiry model • Transferring learning to new situations/beyond school	Reflecting on the process

Reflecting on the process

Reflecting on the process includes both the affective and cognitive thoughts associated with metacognition and is integral to all phases in the Inquiry Model: Planning, Retrieving, Processing, Creating, Sharing and Evaluating.

Metacognition during the phases

Inquirers undergo the following thoughts and feelings during the phases of the inquiry process:

Phase	Cognitive Domain	Affective Domain
Planning	• get a picture of the whole process with its parts • plan the whole process • generate topic ideas	• feel optimistic, yet uncertain and worried • understand that feelings will change during the process
Retrieving	• brainstorm sources • generate search words • understand different kinds of searching patterns	• feel confused, doubtful, angry and sometimes threatened
Processing	• begin with a focus • recognize the difference between relevant and pertinent information	• feel optimistic initially and confident in their ability to complete the task • feel increased interest
Creating	• organize information • select a genre/format • create a new knowledge product	• feel excitement and interest but also pressure to complete the product
Sharing	• think about their audience • respond appropriately to their audience	• feel excitement and interest but also pressure to perform
Evaluating	• ask what they learned about the topic (content) • ask what they learned about inquiry (process) • ask why inquiry is important (goals and purpose) • ask what they learned that they can use elsewhere (transfer)	• feel a sense of relief • feel satisfaction or dissatisfaction • understand how their feelings change during inquiry • understand how to cope with their changing feelings

Questions inquirers ask during the phases/Developing metacognition during the phases/Helping students develop metacognition skills

Teachers work with students to assist them in better understanding their thoughts during the inquiry process. The following questions can be used by students to better understand their metacognitive processes, are framed from the perspective of a senior high school student and can be adapted by teachers for any grade level:

Phase	Cognitive Thoughts	Affective Thoughts
Planning	What are the phases of the inquiry process? Does my plan include all the phases? What are some possible ideas about my topic that I am interested in?	What am I feeling now about my inquiry (optimistic yet uncertain and worried)? How are my feelings likely to change during the inquiry process?
Retrieving	Which phase am I working on now? What sources of information have been useful? What is important to know about these sources? What search words/searching approaches have been most useful?	What am I feeling at this phase about my inquiry (confused, doubtful, angry and sometimes threatened)? How can I deal with these feelings in ways that will enhance my success?
Processing	Which phase am I working on now? What is the focus of my inquiry? How do I recognize the difference between pertinent and relevant information?	What am I feeling at this phase about my inquiry (perhaps optimistic initially and confident in my ability to complete the task; increased interest as knowledge increases)?
Creating	Which phase am I working on now? How might I organize my information and ideas? What is important to know about the genre/format I am using? How do I know when my work is finished?	What am I feeling at this phase about my inquiry (excitement and interest; pressure to complete the product)?
Sharing	Which phase am I working on now? How can I make my product/ presentation most appropriate for my audience? How will I get the response I want from my audience?	What am I feeling at this phase about my inquiry (excitement and interest; pressure to perform)? How can I deal with these feelings in ways that will enhance my success?

Phase	Cognitive Thoughts	Affective Thoughts
Evaluating	What have I learned about the topic (content) of my inquiry? What have I learned about the nature of inquiry (process)? Why is it important to engage in inquiry activities (goals and purpose)? What have I learned that I can use elsewhere (transfer)?	What am I feeling now about my inquiry (a sense of relief; satisfaction or dissatisfaction)? How have my feelings changed during the inquiry process? What have I learned about coping with my feelings during the inquiry process?

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Chapter 3: Curriculum Connections

Teachers recognize the commonalities of curricula across grades and subjects, particularly in the specific outcomes related to skills and attitudes. Inquiry-based learning projects that are integrated with the curriculum and that are cross-disciplinary benefit students by reducing the time required for achieving these outcomes.

Inquiry-based student learning outcomes occur in all curricula and grades. For example, in the English language arts programs of study, Kindergarten to Grade 12, inquiry is promoted within all five general outcomes, but is most strongly emphasized in General Outcome 3: "Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to manage ideas and information" (Alberta Learning, 2000 and 2003a). The *Senior High School English Language Arts Guide to Implementation* clarifies that:

> Although self-contained "research projects" may be described as inquiry projects, the term "inquiry" has a larger meaning than research. It encompasses the habits of mind that promote learning and the processes that can be woven through all classroom activities to enable students to broaden and deepen their understanding of the world. Inquiry processes begin and are sustained by student curiosity. These processes are supported by teachers and students who ask, "What do we need to know?" and "How can we find out?" Inquiry-based instruction fosters and sustains an attitude of inquiry that connects with lifelong learning and metacognition (Alberta Learning, 2003e, p. 242).

Inquiry-based learning and the curriculum

The most successful curriculum inquiry projects emerge from topics that are of personal interest to the students. In a teacher-directed inquiry project, students need to have a choice of topics about which they truly wonder and care, and there needs to be an identifiable time when students work on their inquiries, rather than inquiries being what they do virtually all day. In student-directed inquiry projects, the teacher may provide curriculum-related themes and allow students to generate their own topic questions.

In today's standards-driven world, theme selection also helps teachers align students' inquiries with the curriculum. It is important to ensure that resources, technology and other materials are available for students as they engage in the inquiry process.

Inquiry models throughout the Alberta curriculum	Alberta programs of study present inquiry models that are useful to compare and contrast with the Inquiry Model presented in this guide. While terms may change, the concepts of inquiry-based learning are included in all programs of study. The curriculum links presented on the following pages represent only some of the inquiry-based components and reflect the curriculum in place at the time of this guide's publication. Therefore, teachers need to use the latest version of curriculum documents to ensure that they have the fullest and most current information in relation to the inquiry-based outcomes for each program of studies.

The following curriculum links demonstrate that well-designed inquiry-based learning projects each year are a means by which many outcomes can be accomplished by students:

English Language Arts Kindergarten to Grade 9
(Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 46)

General Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information

3.1 Plan and Focus
Focus attention
Determine information needs
Plan to gather information

3.2 Select and Process
Use a variety of sources
Access information
Evaluate sources

3.3 Organize, Record and Evaluate
Organize information
Record information
Evaluate information

3.4 Share and Review
Share ideas and information
Review research process

English Language Arts Grades 10 to 12
(Alberta Learning, 2003a, p. 38)

General Outcome 3: Manage ideas and information

3.1 Determine inquiry or research requirements
3.1.1 Focus on purpose and presentation form
3.1.2 Plan inquiry or research, and identify information needs and sources

3.2 Follow a plan of inquiry
3.2.1 Select, record and organize information
3.2.2 Evaluate sources, and assess information
3.2.3 Form generalizations and conclusions
3.2.4 Review inquiry or research process and findings

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) All Grades	The general and specific outcomes of the Information and Communication Technology Kindergarten to Grade 12 Program of Studies, which are infused throughout Alberta curricula, fall under three categories: • communicating, inquiring, decision making and problem solving • foundational operations, knowledge and concepts • processes for productivity. The category closely aligned with the inquiry process is that of *Communicating, Inquiring, Decision making and Problem Solving* (Alberta Learning, 2000–2003, p. 2). The general and specific outcomes for this category provide further details.
Mathematics Kindergarten to Grade 12	An inquiry approach to mathematics is evident throughout the curricula. Each program of studies includes an Instructional Focus that emphasizes that "problem solving, reasoning and connections are vital to increasing mathematical power and must be integrated throughout the program" (Alberta Learning, 1996, p. 13; Alberta Learning, 1997, p. 13; Alberta Education, 1998, p. 15; Alberta Learning, 2002, p. 3; Alberta Learning, 2003b, p. 14).
Science Grades 1 to 6	Learner expectations for elementary science are linked to two main areas of skill emphasis: science inquiry, and problem solving through technology. "Inquiry is the process of finding answers to questions…. Engagement in inquiry is not a linear process; it can have a variety of starting points, and the steps followed may vary from one inquiry activity to another" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. A.3). "The skills of science inquiry include asking questions, proposing ideas, observing, experimenting, and interpreting the evidence that is gathered" (Alberta Education, 1996, p. A.3).
Science Grades 7 to 12	The science programs for grades 7 to 9 and Science 14–24 are based on four foundations; the third foundation reflects the inquiry process: **Foundation 3:** "Students will develop the skills required for scientific and technological inquiry, for solving problems, for communicating scientific ideas and results, for working collaboratively and for making informed decisions" (Alberta Learning, 2003c, 2003d, p. 3). The skills that students need to develop are: Initiating and Planning, Performing and Recording,

Analyzing and Interpreting, and Communication and Teamwork (Alberta Learning, 2003c, 2003d, p. 3).

The program rationale and philosophy in Science Grades 7–8–9 and Science 14–24 states that students "must also develop the broad-based skills needed to identify and analyze problems; explore and test solutions; and seek, interpret and evaluate information" (Alberta Learning, 2003c, 2003d, p. 1).

Other senior high school science programs, including Science 10, Biology 20–30, Chemistry 20–30, Physics 20–30 and Science 20–30, "place an increased emphasis on developing methods of inquiry that characterize the study of science. For example, students will further their ability to ask questions, investigate and experiment; gather, analyze and assess scientific information; and test scientific principles and their applications. They will develop their problem-solving ability and use technology" (Alberta Education, 1994, p. 1).

Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 12

Although the current social studies curriculum is under revision, both the existing and the proposed programs reflect an inquiry process throughout. The existing programs of study use models for problem solving and decision making from grades 1 to 12.

The Social Studies Kindergarten to Grade 9 Program of Studies, Validation Draft, May 2003, states that Kindergarten to Grade 12 social studies "is designed to promote metacognition through critical reflection, questioning, decision making and consideration of multiple perspectives on issues" (Alberta Learning, 2003f, p. 6). The section on Outcomes Related to Skills and Processes identifies four core outcome categories: Dimensions of Thinking, Social Participation as a Democratic Practice, Research for Deliberative Inquiry, and Communication (Alberta Learning, 2003f, p. 8). The Dimensions of Thinking category includes critical thinking, creative thinking, metacognition, decision making and problem solving. (Alberta Learning, 2003f, pp. 8–9). The Research for Deliberative Inquiry category states that "the research process develops learners who are independent, self-motivated problem solvers and co-creators of knowledge. Developing research skills prepares students for the world of work, post-secondary studies, lifelong learning and citizenship in a complex world" (Alberta Learning, 2003f, p. 10).

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Chapter 4: Designing Inquiry Activities

Note: The following chapter is adapted from *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills* (Alberta Education, 1990).

Teachers who plan successful inquiry-based learning activities take the time to think through the process. Inquiry-based learning requires many skills and strategies and a wide range of resources from beyond the school library and classroom. It is important that teachers select a curriculum theme that is worthy of the time and effort involved and that will be interesting to students for more than a short-term period. Early selection of a theme and inquiry activity will give teachers the time to build the students' background knowledge, to develop the inquiry skills and strategies that students will need, and to acquire or add to the required resources.

Focus on success: An inquiry-based learning activity

Step 1
Decide which unit provides the best opportunities for inquiry-based learning.
- Begin with the program of studies and your yearly plan.
- Think about resources in your school and community.
- Look for entry points, as well as topics that will engage students' interests and involve a problem or issue.
- Choose a curriculum-based theme for which:
  - background knowledge will be developed prior to the inquiry
  - students bring a strong background of experience or knowledge.
- Consider if the theme presents many opportunities to engage all students in your class, including male and female students, the highly motivated and those who require a lot of encouragement.
- Keep in mind that some themes popular with young children may not have resources available at the appropriate reading level.

Step 2
Decide on the scope and end-product of the inquiry activity.
- If teaching inquiry-based learning for the first time, limit the scope of the project in terms of time, topic selection and end-product. Focus on ensuring success for your students.
- Consider how many product formats you are willing to teach.
- Make sure that students will share information in a way that is very simple or very familiar to them.
- Set timelines and specific classes for the inquiry activity.

Step 3

Select appropriate resources and plan for their use. The inquiry activity may have to be redefined at this point to take into account available resources.

- Choose resources in different formats (e.g., print, nonprint, digital, multimedia) and at different reading levels.
- Use a stations approach in the classroom or school library if resources are very limited.
- Confirm, arrange and/or set up access to resources.
- Schedule time for students to browse some resources in the school library or classroom before the inquiry begins, so they become comfortable with resources other than textbooks.

Step 4

Determine the order in which the unit and inquiry activity will be taught.

- Plan the inquiry project for the mid-point to the end of a unit once students have learned background knowledge on the theme. Students will have developed interest in the topic and will have had a chance to think about questions of particular interest to them.
- Let students know when they will start an inquiry activity—this allows students to think about topics and gather resources in advance.

Step 5

Determine which inquiry skills will be stressed throughout the inquiry and which will be taught prior to the inquiry activity.

- Assess students' competencies in a variety of inquiry skills. Students can identify what skills they know and what skills require instruction.
- Analyze what inquiry skills will be required by a project and what to teach in advance.
- Limit the number of inquiry skills taught within an inquiry activity.

Step 6

Decide where (e.g., classroom, school library) and for how long the inquiry activity will occur.

- Work with the teacher–librarian to present a variety of structures: team teaching, small groups in the school library and classroom, computer labs, discussion groups.

Roles of the teacher in an inquiry-based classroom
1. Motivator
2. Diagnostician
3. Guide
4. Innovator
5. Experimenter
6. Researcher
7. Modeller
8. Mentor
9. Collaborator
10. Learner
(Crawford, 2000)

Step 7
Plan to monitor students' work as they apply related inquiry skills.
- Determine how you will monitor student progress in both content and process on an ongoing basis.
- Plan for differentiated instruction as the need arises.
- Plan for student self-evaluation and reflecting on the process.
- Plan for evaluating and revising the assignment at the end of the process.
- Determine how you will know if the process has been successful.

Step 8
Introduce the inquiry activity to the class as an integral part of classroom studies.
- Keep a list of questions, issues and problems that arise during the unit for further investigation.
- Spread the inquiry activity throughout the unit so that students have time to think about a topic of interest, talk to parents and other family members, and find a focus.

Integrating inquiry-based learning activities into the curriculum is evolutionary. For teachers who are new to integrating inquiry activities, begin slowly. As teachers and students experience positive development in teaching methods and skills, their commitment to inquiry will increase. The ideal situation for developing an inquiry unit occurs when team-teaching or cooperative planning occurs between a teacher–librarian and teacher or between teachers (Alberta Education, 1990, pp. 28–29).

Focus on the teacher and teacher–librarian

A school library program under the direction of a teacher–librarian, who is skilled in cooperative planning and teaching, provides the most effective environment for inquiry. Cooperation between a teacher–librarian and teachers in the development of effectively planned inquiry-based learning activities ensures that students are taught information skills, the inquiry process and subject content (Alberta Education, 1990, p. 10).

To integrate inquiry skills into the curriculum, the teacher and/or teacher–librarian:
- understand the skills involved in inquiry
- are committed to student-centred learning
- plan for the inquiry process and thinking skill development
- are flexible in teaching styles

- assess the inquiry skills that students have and need
- are aware of children's needs and capabilities
- adapt to new findings in learning theory and child development.

Facilitating inquiry-based learning

Students learn inquiry skills, strategies and processes more readily when inquiry-based learning activities are:
- integrated with curriculum
- taught with the focus on developing lifelong learners and critical thinkers
- viewed by students as relevant to their needs
- related to the students' past experiences
- shared through cooperative learning.

To help students develop an understanding of the inquiry process, the teacher and/or teacher–librarian:
- identifies a curriculum entry point
- designs an inquiry-based learning project/activity
- supports students as they generate and refine a topic
- models the process out loud to help students.

As students work through the inquiry process, the teacher and/or teacher–librarian:
- motivates students to locate, analyze and use information
- assists students to clarify thinking through questioning, paraphrasing and talking through tasks
- provides students with opportunities to record information
- provides students with opportunities to focus on steps required to complete inquiry
- individualizes teaching
- evaluates student progress in content and process areas
- models inquiry behaviours (e.g., demonstrating and modelling the inquiry-based learning process)
- facilitates and models questioning behaviours (e.g., providing opportunities for students to develop and ask questions).

Cooperative planning

Cooperative planning of an inquiry activity involves a teacher working with a teacher–librarian, or teachers working together. The first step is to set out objectives for the inquiry and plan the activities with the teacher–librarian or other teachers. The teaching of inquiry skills should be integrated into the plan. Cooperative planning allows for variations in group size (e.g., whole class, two teaching groups, small groups).

Cooperative planning of an inquiry with a colleague or a team of teachers should be approached in the same manner as with the teacher–librarian, except that two or more classes are now involved. In the team-planning approach, each teacher brings special talents that can be used. The team approach also divides the labour and lightens the workload. After the unit planning is complete, each teacher adapts the unit to the needs of the students.

Assessing inquiry

Extensive resources to support teachers' assessment work are available from the Alberta Assessment Consortium (1997, 2000). These resources identify many criteria that improve student learning. In relation to the inquiry process, "Learning is enhanced when:
- assessment strategies match the learner outcomes and are aligned to instruction
- assessment is integrated with instruction (unit and lesson planning)
- assessment relates new concept(s) to previous learning
- students are involved with their own assessment
- students get immediate, meaningful feedback
- students of all abilities are able to demonstrate what they know and what they can do
- assessment engages and motivates students" (Alberta Assessment Consortium, 2000, p. 2).

Before implementing inquiry-based learning activities with students, plan for the assessment of the inquiry process and the final product(s). Planning for assessment provides the foundation for thinking about what students already know, what they need to know, what instructional emphases will be given and what students will have learned when the inquiry activity is complete. Teachers need to plan for diagnostic, formative and summative assessment when designing inquiry activities.

- **Diagnostic assessment** is used to find out which inquiry skills and strategies students know and can use; and then to build on these strengths during the inquiry. Areas of weakness and difficulty can be targeted for planned instruction during the inquiry activity. Diagnostic assessment also helps teachers recognize when individualized or differentiated instruction may be necessary for certain students in a class.

- **Formative assessment** is critical in the planning for inquiry activities. Inquiry-based learning assessment focuses on the inquiry process to monitor student progress and learning. Ongoing, formative assessment helps teachers identify the development of students' skills and strategies, and monitors students' planning, retrieving, processing and creating skills during the inquiry activity. This ongoing assessment allows teachers to modify instruction, adapt the inquiry activity and support students with special instructional needs.

- **Summative assessment** is carried out at the end of the inquiry activity to provide information to students and parents about progress and achievement on the inquiry activity. This type of assessment helps the teacher and the students plan for further inquiries. Summative assessment assesses both the content and the process of the inquiry.

Planning for assessment requires that teachers consider the purposes for assessment in the inquiry activity, and the teachers then choose appropriate assessment strategies for each of the three types of assessment. All three types of assessment are essential to an understanding of what students learn during an inquiry-based learning activity.

Assessment practices should:
- be part of an ongoing process rather than a set of isolated events
- focus on both product and process
- provide opportunities for students to revise their work in order to set goals and improve their learning
- provide a status report of how well students can demonstrate learner outcomes at that time
- be developmentally appropriate, age-appropriate, gender-balanced and consider students cultural and special needs
- include multiple sources of evidence (formal and informal)
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do
- involve students in identifying and/or creating criteria
- communicate the criteria used to evaluate student work before students begin tasks so they can plan for success
- be communicated to students so that they understand expectations related to learner outcomes (Alberta Learning, 2003, pp. 7–8).

Also, assessment practices should help and encourage students to:
- be responsible for their own learning
- be involved in establishing criteria for evaluating their products or performances
- work together to learn and achieve outcomes
- feel competent and successful
- set goals for further improvements (Alberta Learning, 2003, pp. 7–8).

Structuring inquiry-based learning activities

The developmental level of the children will have an impact on the nature of the inquiry-based learning activities, the end product and how it is shared. At all levels, appropriate positive feedback and support is necessary for student ownership of the activity.

The following checklists may be useful for teachers who are implementing inquiry-based learning:

For students new to inquiry and/or in Kindergarten to Grade 3
- ❑ Students choose from teacher-selected, concrete topics.
- ❑ Students begin work on the project by relating it to their personal experiences.
- ❑ Teacher provides carefully selected resources, including Internet sites, for students.
- ❑ Students talk to others to gather information about their topic.
- ❑ Students are specifically taught skills for reading simple informational texts.
- ❑ Students are specifically taught note-taking skills to record their information, using a graphic organizer that is provided by the teacher.
- ❑ Students create a basic report or presentation based on specific guidelines.
- ❑ Students share their final report/project with small groups within the classroom and with family.
- ❑ Students talk about their feelings and progress each class.
- ❑ Teacher sets evaluation criteria for the product and the process.
- ❑ Teacher monitors progress at the end of each class.
- ❑ Students talk about what went well and what was challenging.

For students with limited inquiry experience and/or in grades 4–6

❑ Students, with guidance, select specific topics within a general curriculum theme selected by the teacher.
❑ Students work from background knowledge provided by the teacher or their own experiences, and build basic understandings of the general curriculum theme.
❑ Teacher provides carefully selected resources, including Internet sites, for students and also encourages and supports student searches.
❑ Students talk to others to gather information about their topic.
❑ Students are specifically taught skills for reading more complex informational texts.
❑ Students are taught basic search engine strategies for the Internet, including how different search engines work.
❑ Students begin to use finding guides, such as online library catalogues, online subject directories, keyword and subject searches, indexes, tables of contents, and databases.
❑ Students are taught note-taking skills, using graphic organizers provided by the teacher.
❑ Students create a basic report or presentation based on specific guidelines. Students are encouraged to be creative in their product.
❑ Students begin to use technology to enhance their presentations and reports.
❑ Students share their final report/project with small groups, with other classes and with family.
❑ Students understand evaluation criteria for process and product.
❑ Students learn and apply appropriate peer-evaluation skills.
❑ Students talk about their feelings and progress each class.
❑ Teacher monitors progress at the end of each class.
❑ Students talk about what went well and what was challenging.

For students with more inquiry experience and/or in grades 7–9

❑ Students, with guidance, select issues-based topics (arguing for or against or both for and against) within a general curriculum theme selected by the teacher.
❑ Students build on their general background understandings of the theme.
❑ Students carefully select and evaluate a variety of resources.

- ❑ Students develop in-depth understanding of the topic based on an information retrieval plan.
- ❑ Students work with others to monitor understandings.
- ❑ Students are specifically taught skills for reading and evaluating complex informational texts.
- ❑ Students use finding guides, such as indexes, tables of contents, online library catalogues, databases, keyword and advanced searches, and online subject directories.
- ❑ Students use the Internet, with guidance and instruction from the teacher.
- ❑ Teacher provides a choice of notes or graphic organizers for students to record information.
- ❑ Students are specifically taught note-taking skills, including highlighting techniques.
- ❑ Teacher assists students in modifying and adapting their topics.
- ❑ Students create a report or presentation based on guidelines provided in the planning phase and in response to the needs and interests of the intended audience.
- ❑ Students use technology appropriately to enhance their presentations and reports.
- ❑ Students share the final report/project with larger groups, with other classes, in the community and/or with family.
- ❑ Students help set evaluation criteria for process and product.
- ❑ Students learn and apply appropriate peer-evaluation skills.
- ❑ Students share their feelings and progress each class.
- ❑ Teacher monitors progress at the end of each class.
- ❑ Students talk about what went well and what was challenging.

For students who are advanced inquirers and/or in grades 10–12

- ❑ Students select specific topics—either issues-based or thesis based—within parameters set by the teacher.
- ❑ Students develop and support a position or point of view for thesis-based inquiry, which may involve social action in the community.
- ❑ Students build on their general background understandings of their topic to develop an in-depth understanding of the topic, based on a student-generated information retrieval and processing plan.
- ❑ Students carefully select and evaluate a wide variety of resources.
- ❑ Students work with others to monitor understandings.
- ❑ Students are specifically taught, as needed, skills for reading and evaluating complex informational texts.

- ❏ Students use finding guides appropriately.
- ❏ Students use the Internet, with guidance and instruction from the teacher.
- ❏ Students record information using the most appropriate note-taking strategies.
- ❏ Students create a report or presentation based on guidelines developed in the planning phase and in response to the needs and interests of the intended audience.
- ❏ Students use technology appropriately and creatively to enhance their presentations and reports.
- ❏ Students share their final report/project with larger groups, with other classes, in the community and/or with family.
- ❏ Students are involved in setting evaluation criteria for process and product.
- ❏ Students provide appropriate self-evaluation and peer evaluation of the final product and their own inquiry process.
- ❏ Students monitor and adapt their own inquiry skills and strategies during the process.
- ❏ Students share their feelings and progress each class.
- ❏ Teacher monitors progress at the end of each class.
- ❏ Students talk about what went well and what was challenging.

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Chapter 5: How Do I Teach Reflecting on the Process?

Key outcomes

Students will:
- understand that inquiry is a personal learning process
- understand that the inquiry process is transferable to other learning situations
- develop their metacognitive and reflecting skills—thinking about their thinking and thinking about their feelings
- develop strategies for monitoring and enhancing their thinking and feelings.

Building student skills for Reflecting on the Process

In the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- complete several different learning style inventories
- write/talk about their preferred learning styles
- write/talk about how they find answers to questions/wonderings outside of school
- write/talk about previous successes and challenges when doing inquiry
- write/talk about their feelings in a supportive environment when learning new and difficult ideas
- review their processes of learning at the end of a lesson, day or week.

Teaching Reflecting on the Process

In the context of an inquiry-based learning activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- write/talk about their current phase in the inquiry process
- write in a journal or log about their feelings and strategies during the inquiry process
- share with others (peers, teachers, parents) their successes and frustrations at each phase during the inquiry process
- brainstorm and/or post the affective and cognitive challenges that they are experiencing each day
- write/talk about things that surprise them during the inquiry process
- develop lists of ways to address their frustrations during the inquiry process
- review and comment on new learnings at the end of the inquiry process by examining their journals/logs.
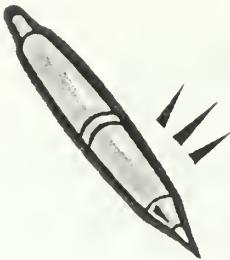
TIPS for Teachers: Reflecting on the Process
- Teach students that inquiry involves the unexpected for teachers and students.
- Teach students to self-check: "Is this information even remotely connected to my question?"
- Share the "high point of the day" and the "frustration of the day."

Assessing Reflecting on the Process

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry-based learning activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- submit their journals/logs on an ongoing basis and at the end of the inquiry process
- write/talk about new learnings as a result of reflecting on the process
- give examples of other situations where the inquiry process could be or is used
- compare and contrast their learning process to that of others in the class
- write/talk about strategies that they can use to cope with the frustrations of doing inquiry
- write/talk about their own inquiry process and compare it with the process of others in the class
- write/talk about the strategies that they can use to support their learning in each of the phases of the inquiry process.

Thinking about Reflecting on the Process

The core purpose of the Reflecting on the Process component in the Inquiry Model is to involve students in their own learning by developing their metacognitive skills. This component is key in each and every phase of the inquiry process, integral to the success of inquiry-based learning activities, and is actively practised throughout the inquiry process. Students are taught reflection skills and strategies so that inquiry becomes a natural process.

Inquiry work with students is an active interchange between students and teachers, and of ideas, information, learnings, experiences, activities and feelings, through which meaning is constructed. This interchange is supportive, discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflective. Teachers suggest how students can move forward, see things from new perspectives, make connections between previous and new knowledge, and see the patterns of their learning.

Sample Activity for Reflecting on the Process

Connecting with the Process

The teacher asks students to reflect on the way they would solve a hypothetical problem—perhaps choosing a new skateboard, snowboard or bicycle or doing a research project. Students write down the list of steps in their inquiry process. Divide the blackboard into three sections—Beginning, Middle and End—and record student suggestions from their inquiry steps for each of the three sections. Once the class has included their steps in the sections, ask students to share and compare their feelings during the beginning, middle and end of the inquiry process. Compare the students' personal inquiry plan to the Inquiry Model in this document.

Chapter 6: How Do I Teach Phase 1—Planning?

Skills and Strategies	• Identifying a topic area for inquiry • Identifying possible information sources • Identifying audience and presentation format • Establishing evaluation criteria • Outlining a plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- explore ideas and questions and identify a topic area for their inquiry
- develop a plan for their inquiry
- develop an information pathfinder (step-by-step plan for gathering resources) to identify, locate and evaluate information
- consider needs of the audience in terms of creating and sharing
- understand or help develop assessment criteria for both product and process
- recognize the process nature of the work and acknowledge that reworking, rethinking and refocusing are integral to the inquiry process
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Planning

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- brainstorm possible questions, ideas and issues
- use concept mapping software, mind maps or topic webs to record ideas
- use a three column, *What I **Know**, What I **Want** to Know, What I **Learned*** (KWL), chart to develop questions about the topic of inquiry
- brainstorm possible information sources, including print and electronic resources
- brainstorm and evaluate a list of creating/sharing formats, based on the needs of the audience and on the assessment criteria
- understand and/or help develop the criteria for process (e.g., checklist) and product (e.g., rubric) evaluation with assistance from the teacher and other students in the class
- discuss possible challenges/difficulties that may arise and offer possible solutions—especially for reworking or changing an inquiry.

TIPS for Teachers: Planning
- Limit the number of new concepts and skills you and your students can reasonably handle during the time available for the inquiry.
- Consider using a checklist similar to a teacher preparedness checklist for research (http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/tips/i-search/tchrprep.html).

Assessing Planning

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- develop and write a plan for their inquiry
- write/talk about why they are interested in their topic (more or less depending on grade level)
- write/talk about the perceived needs of their intended audience
- write/talk about what criteria should be used to assess the inquiry process and the final product
- write/talk about their own inquiry process.

Thinking about Planning

The time spent by both the teacher and students in the Planning phase determines the success of the inquiry-based activity.

At the beginning of an inquiry-based learning activity, students need to be given the opportunity to visualize the entire inquiry process. Getting a sense of the project as a whole supports student success. Engaging students in the preparation and planning of the activity is crucial. Even the youngest inquirers, with the teacher's guidance, can identify what they know and what they want to know about the theme, can develop authentic questions, can generate ideas about potential information sources, and can discuss potential audiences and evaluation criteria for their work.

Identifying a topic (i.e., developing the authentic question or topic) is an important task for students in this phase. To do inquiry well, students need prior knowledge about the theme, and the topic must be at the appropriate level of abstraction.

Young researchers (i.e., 5- to 11-year-olds) or inexperienced researchers of any age are more able to handle general knowledge topics where the emphasis is on fact-finding and organization of ideas. Junior high school or middle school students (i.e., 12- to 15-year-olds) are just beginning to be able to handle the abstract reasoning involved in narrowing a topic or for

developing a position paper (Loerke, 1992). Senior high school students (i.e., 16- to 18-year-olds) can develop and support a thesis statement if they have had good research experience in earlier years.

Teachers need to plan the inquiry project and its parameters long before the students begin work on their projects. Curricular themes and topics that students find personally compelling and that link to the out-of-school world are the best choices (Tallman, 1998). The teacher must facilitate careful and thoughtful work to ensure that topics and research questions require higher level thinking skills, that they will challenge students and that they will engage their interest and curiosity. Students feel more positive toward investigative activities when they are involved in choosing or developing research topics. Contrary to expectations, students in the senior grades often have less involvement in topic and question generation than do younger students (Gross, 1997).

For complex topics or for assignments where students are given wide choices, students need more opportunity to do general reading, to assess sources of information and to develop their interest and focus.

Gauge the feelings
As students begin their inquiry, they feel optimistic, yet uncertain and worried. They need to know that their feelings will change as they proceed through the inquiry process.

Sample Activity for Planning

Developing Good Inquiry Topics and Questions (Adapted from Owens, Hester & Teale, 2002)
Teach students, as they brainstorm possible questions, ideas and issues, to keep asking: "Am I going to be telling my audience something they didn't know before?" (commonly called the Who Cares? Test). The following question stems (King, 1991) assist in the development of engaging topics:

How is _____ related to _____?
What is a new example of _____?
What are some possible solutions for the problem of _____?
Explain why _____.
What do you think would happen if _____?
Why is _____ important?

Example theme: Football
A student in Grade 5 wants to conduct an inquiry about football.
Her initial questions are primarily information seeking.
1. When was Canadian football invented?
2. Who invented it?
3. Where was it invented?
4. Who were the first teams?
5. What are the rules?
6. What equipment is used?
7. Which team has won the most Grey Cups?

Using question stems
However, when she uses question stems to generate possible topics, more intriguing topics are developed:
1. How is Canadian football related to games played in other countries?
2. How has the game of Canadian football changed since it was invented?
3. What causes the most common football injury?
4. How do Canadian football players' salaries compare to salaries of other Canadian professional athletes?
5. Why is football such a popular sport to watch?
6. Why does the CFL (Canadian Football League) have a hard time catching on in the United States?

Exploring perspectives
The student is then taught ways to explore the theme from various perspectives, using questions about the theme from the viewpoint of specialists in different disciplines (e.g., science, mathematics). Samples of questions include:
1. What would be a good science (or mathematics, history, art) question related to this topic?
2. What kind of question would a doctor (or lawyer, artist, banker, mother, construction worker, environmentalist, social worker, minister, priest, businessperson) ask about this topic?

After considering the question stems and perspectives, the student decides that the question she will begin her inquiry with is:

"What are some possible solutions for the problem of common football injuries?"

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Chapter 7: How Do I Teach Phase 2— Retrieving?

Skills and Strategies	• Developing an information retrieval plan • Locating and collecting resources • Selecting relevant information • Evaluating information • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- understand that successful retrieving depends on preplanning
- develop an effective search strategy, including key words, Boolean searching, subject searching, synonyms, narrowing/broadening the topic, subject directories
- understand how information is organized in libraries
- create a working bibliography of appropriate print, nonprint and electronic resources
- understand that different sources provide different kinds of information
- evaluate search strategies and offer suggestions for improvement next time
- determine if modifications to the topic are necessary
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Retrieving

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- refine and develop a list of search terms, key words and subject headings prior to searching
- use online library catalogues to locate materials in school and public libraries
- use the Online Reference Centre (www.LearnAlberta.ca) to locate information
- use full-text databases (e.g., SIRS, eLibrary)
- use indexes to locate print, nonprint and electronic information
- learn how to efficiently use the Internet to locate materials.

Teaching Retrieving

During and in the context of an inquiry-based learning activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- understand that the Retrieving phase of the inquiry process is a method of problem solving that requires both critical thinking and imaginative thinking
- create a search strategy
- explore a variety of print, nonprint and electronic sources
- access resources within the school and beyond
- communicate with experts, both locally and beyond

- record bibliographic information for print sources, including title, author, date, page numbers, publisher and place of publication
- record bibliographic information for nonprint (multimedia) sources, including title, author, date, running time and/or number of images, producer and/or distributor, location of producer/production company
- record bibliographic information for electronic sources, including title, author, date, URL and date retrieved
- use a variety of grade-appropriate strategies for recording and organizing bibliographic information, such as index cards, recording templates, word processing programs or software tools.

TIPS for Teachers: Retrieving
- Teach the difference between relevant (generally related) and pertinent (directly related) information.
- Beware of hyperleaping—teach searching skills for databases and for the Internet.
- Teach students to self-check—"Is this information even remotely connected to my question?"
- Expand resource horizons—use databases.
- Teach critical reading skills—skimming and scanning skills.
- Teach critical thinking skills—comparing and contrasting.
- Use the Internet to delve into topics—preview and bookmark appropriate sites.
- Help students to evaluate Web sites—currency, coverage, objectivity, accuracy, authority.
- Teach students what to do when they come across inappropriate materials (variation on stop, drop and roll).

Assessing Retrieving

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher provides opportunities for students to:
- create an information pathfinder (step-by-step plan for gathering resources)
- complete a list of sources consulted
- hand in notes, webs, note cards or other note-taking formats
- write/talk about their retrieval strategy and what worked and did not work
- write/talk about the sources they found most useful and why.

Thinking about Retrieving

In this phase, students collect sources of information. If students are young or inexperienced, or if information on the topic is very hard to access, use a stations approach—providing and organizing the materials by format or media. If students are to be successful in finding their sources independently, teach them to have a good working knowledge of information finding tools, such as indexes and online library catalogues, and of the systems used for organizing information. Students also need to be taught search strategies, such as using Boolean logic, and how to develop and use an information search plan or pathfinder.

Information seeking, even before the Internet, has always been a complex aspect of inquiry. Retrieving information is often a frustrating experience for students and their teachers. This is because the students' "need to know" is often not easily translated into the terminology and structure of the information system, and the information systems—such as the Dewey Decimal System, online library catalogues, magazine and newspaper (periodical) indexes, and the World Wide Web—often are not particularly intuitive or user-friendly. Teachers need to have a basic knowledge of information systems and search strategies in order to prepare students to be flexible and creative searchers and in order to assist students when they hit dead ends in a search or end up with thousands of hits in an Internet search.

TIPS for Retrieving

Most information searching today is electronic, and although most students feel very much at home "online," they often do not realize that some of the search strategies recommended for the Internet are the opposite of those recommended for online library catalogues or other more structured finding aids, such as indexes and databases.

Search strategies that students need to know:
- Avoid plurals on the Web (e.g., dog, not dogs), but use plurals with online library catalogues (e.g., dogs, not dog).
- Always start an Internet search with at least 6 to 8 words; start an online library catalogue subject search with no more than 1 to 3 words.
- Browse the shelves close to a book on their topic—materials in libraries are arranged by topics.
- Search resources on broader topics (using the broader subject approach) by using the resources' finding aids (i.e., tables of contents and indexes).

During the Planning phase of an inquiry project, teachers help students prepare for the Retrieving phase by modelling and facilitating brainstorming of potential information sources. Once potential sources have been identified, teachers help students generate the search words that will help them access the information they need. Depending on the focus of the inquiry project, students may need to use one or more kinds of searching: subject, author, title, keyword, Boolean (combining search terms using "and," "or," or "not"), full text, or call number.

When students have problems generating subjects or keywords for searches, teachers may find it useful to teach one or more of the five basic patterns of keyword searching (Wehmeyer, 1984):

Pattern	Ask the Question	Examples
Synonyms	"Is there another way to say or spell it?"	Cars or Automobiles; Vikings or Norsemen; Leonardo da Vinci or Da Vinci or Leonardo or Vinci; Grey Owl or Archie Belaney; Literature, Canada or Canadian Literature
Larger subjects	"Is there a larger subject that might include it?"	Ants—try Insects Model Airplanes—try Models and Model Making D-day—try World War II
Smaller subjects	"Is there a smaller subject that might be worth looking up?"	Amphibians—try Frogs, Toads, or Salamanders Funny Poems—try Limericks
Intersecting subjects	"Does it overlap another topic?"	Festivals in China—try Festivals and try China
Time/place/ field/works	"When and where did this person live? What is she or he famous for?"	Leonardo da Vinci—try Renaissance; Italy, History; Art, History; Mona Lisa Emily Carr—try Art, Canadian; Painters, Canada; Vancouver artists

Gauge the feelings

Students often experience information overload during the Retrieving phase (Akin, 1998). Teachers need to be alert to the feelings and physical outlets that may characterize information overload—anger, frustration, fatigue, irritability, leg jiggling, lack of focus—and help students to recognize these signs of overload. In addition to helping students understand that it is normal to experience such feelings during the inquiry process, teach students useful coping strategies, such as omission or filtering (ignoring or selecting certain categories of information), generalizing or twigging (broadening or narrowing the topic), or asking for help.

Getting a large picture of the topic and its subcategories, by using whole class or small group activities, such as concept-mapping or deciding what kinds of information might be appropriate for the topic, are helpful strategies for this phase, especially when information overload is, or may be, a problem.

Sample Activity for Retrieving

Developing a Pathfinder or Step-by-Step Search Plan
Teach students the following procedures:
- Start with general works (dictionaries, print and electronic encyclopedias, atlases, almanacs).
- Look for and record key words, search terms and subject headings while reading.
- Use these terms with the online library catalogue.
- Note any new search terms from the online library catalogue.
- Locate materials in the school library.
- Search the Online Reference Centre or other electronic databases, using keywords, search terms and subject headings.
- Ask other people.
- Search the Internet, using a specific search engine and using key terms identified earlier.

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Chapter 8: How Do I Teach Phase 3— Processing?

Skills and Strategies	• Establishing a focus for inquiry • Choosing pertinent information • Recording information • Making connections and inferences • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- evaluate print, nonprint and electronic information, using established criteria
- interpret graphs, charts, illustrations, photographs, audio and video clips, and animation
- record information, using appropriate note-taking strategies
- focus the topic, incorporating new ideas and connections
- recognize the emergence of new questions, issues and ideas as information is gathered and new knowledge is created
- evaluate processing strategies and offer suggestions for improvement next time
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Processing

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- evaluate information from print, nonprint and electronic sources
- evaluate Internet sites, using specific criteria
- ask and answer questions based on graphs, charts, illustrations, photographs, audio and video clips, and animation
- use a variety of graphic organizers to take notes from textbook readings or other classroom activities
- choose an appropriate graphic organizer given the type of information needed to explore the inquiry
- connect new information with previous knowledge by talking to others and reflecting on their *What I **Know**, What I **Want** to Know, What I **Learned*** (KWL) charts.
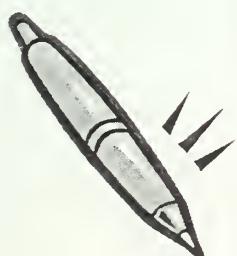
TIPS for Teachers: Processing
- Teach the difference between relevant (generally related) and pertinent (directly related) information.
- Teach critical reading skills—skimming and scanning skills.
- Teach critical thinking skills—comparing and contrasting.

Assessing Processing

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher provides opportunities for students to:

- complete and hand in graphic organizers (e.g., compare/ contrast, cause/effect, commonalities/discrepancies, problems/issues)
- write/talk about which graphic organizer(s) was/were most appropriate for their inquiry
- write/talk about the process
- evaluate Internet sites for accuracy, objectivity, currency, authority and content, using a rubric, an evaluation checklist or other tool
- write/talk about the process of making meaning from information
- write/talk about which resources are most useful for a deeper understanding of their topic and why
- examine their information sources and the order in which they used them
- write/talk about how they are creating new ideas by linking new knowledge to other knowledge or their own personal ideas
- write/talk about graphs, charts and illustrations and how effectively these present information in an easily understood format
- write/talk about how their understanding of the topic has changed/developed since the start of the inquiry
- write/talk about what new questions, problems, issues and ideas have emerged.

Thinking about Processing

In the Processing phase, students select and record information pertinent to their topic; information that will answer the students' questions or fit into their subtopics. The time invested in the Planning phase is apparent, since students will find it easier to establish their focus (e.g., modify, adapt, extend, refine their topic) and to select pertinent information. Students need to learn how to record only the most important information. Electronic resources or the photocopy machine can actually be a detriment to the inquiry process, since it becomes so easy to copy everything. Some students are in the habit of copying text verbatim, so it is often useful to have students spend some time interacting with materials without writing anything down—browsing materials, skimming potential resources and talking about what they have found. This often helps students to concentrate on finding and recording pertinent information.

Students, at all grades, need help in summarizing and learning to take notes. Provide a format for inexperienced inquirers and suggest formats for more experienced inquirers.

Gauge the feelings
At first, students feel optimistic and confident as they tackle their collected data. They become increasingly interested in their topic as they discover new information and make new connections.

Sample Activity for Processing

Teach students note-taking skills and strategies using different graphic organizers (e.g., 3 x 5 cards, software, compare/contrast charts).
Teach students how to identify the important information by practising Read and Recall (no pencils or paper).

Chapter 9: How Do I Teach Phase 4—Creating?

Skills and Strategies	• Organizing information • Creating a product • Thinking about the audience • Revising and editing • Reviewing and revising the plan for inquiry	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- revise/edit to make creation clear, concise, consistent and appropriate for the audience
- work with others to enhance the creative product
- recognize the strengths and limitations of any creative process
- complete a final creation that incorporates information and suggestions from others and highlights new understandings
- recognize that a creative endeavour requires multiple versions before it is ready for sharing
- recognize the emergence of new questions, issues and ideas during the creation process
- evaluate creating strategies and offer suggestions for improvement next time
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Creating

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- work with peers to edit their work (e.g., using a checklist)
- revise, rethink and reorganize creative products
- reflect on the creating phase—what works well and what they would like to do with more time and different software
- make generalizations and establish relationships among concepts
- combine and synthesize information from various sources
- synthesize a unique and personal way to produce a variety of creative products
- produce a variety of creations, including reports, maps, artistic renderings, speeches and displays.

Teaching Creating

During and in the context of an inquiry activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- complete a draft creation for their inquiry that incorporates information and highlights new understandings
- complete a final creation, incorporating suggestions from others.

Assessing Creating

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- hand in an outline, storyboard or first draft/attempt of the final creation
- write/talk about the strengths and weaknesses of their first draft
- write/talk about what they learned from having others look at and respond to their first draft
- write/talk about what things would further enhance the creation and why
- hand in further drafts as necessary.

TIPS for Teachers: Creating
- Limit the use of time and technology for "glitz."
- Use technology to do what would be impossible otherwise.

Thinking about Creating

In this phase of the inquiry process, students organize and synthesize their information and ideas in a unique and personal way. They develop or revise a thesis and formulate alternative answers, solutions and conclusions. Facilitating student discussions before writing can help them express their ideas in their own words. Students categorize information according to various frameworks, developed by themselves or provided for them, such as time/order or cause and effect. Students look for inconsistencies or deficiencies in their information and locate information to rectify such problems.

In this phase, students create a product—oral, visual, written, kinesthetic or multimedia. All products need revision (and instruction if the format used is new to the student).

Gauge the feelings
Students will feel excited, interested and pressured to complete their product at this phase. They have ownership in their product, feel they have expertise in their topic and take any peer or teacher editing very personally.

Sample Activity for Creating

Teach students two or three ways of creating products (e.g., picture book, presentation software, multimedia product).

Chapter 10: How Do I Teach Phase 5—Sharing?

Skills and Strategies	• Communicating with the audience • Presenting new understandings • Demonstrating appropriate audience behaviour	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- share new understandings with an appropriate audience
- focus on the particular needs of the audience
- participate as audience members and reflect on what engages them about a particular sharing experience
- reflect on the successes and challenges of their sharing experiences and write/talk about what they have learned
- evaluate sharing strategies and offer suggestions for improvement next time
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Sharing

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- learn presentation skills
- share new understandings in a variety of ways with an appropriate audience
- share new understandings with larger and more diverse audiences
- develop positive feedback and questioning techniques
- support others in their sharing by participating as audience members.

Teaching Sharing

During and in the context of an inquiry-based learning activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- think about the needs of the audience
- prepare for the sharing by completing presentation notes and practising the sharing in front of a test audience
- practise using audiovisual or electronic materials appropriate to the sharing
- provide constructive suggestions to others as they prepare their sharing experience.

TIPS for Teachers: Sharing
- For oral presentations, provide tips on effective public speaking.
- For presentations using technology, book equipment well in advance and allow sufficient time for glitches.
- Teach audience appreciation to your class.
- Be supportive of student products.
- Allow sufficient time for sharing.

Assessing Sharing

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- write/talk about their reasons for sharing their new knowledge in a particular way
- write/talk about the ways they focused on the needs of their particular audience
- write/talk about what went well with their sharing and what things they need to improve on
- write/talk about the experiences of being in an audience—what things they responded positively and negatively to and why.

Thinking about Sharing

Students present the inquiry product in a way that is meaningful for a particular audience. There should be an opportunity for the students to consider the role of the audience members in enhancing the sharing experience. The audience, preferably a wider audience than just the teacher, is best identified in the Planning phase so that the sharing mode is shaped as early as possible. For young or inexperienced researchers, small-group sharing is often more successful and more time-efficient than requiring each student to share with the whole class or school assembly.

Gauge the feelings
Students feel proud of their work and are both anxious and eager to share it. They may be nervous and are highly sensitive to criticism, and they may respond negatively if they feel that others do not recognize their efforts.

Sample Activity for Sharing

The teacher provides students with an assessment checklist that enables them to determine whether they are prepared for their presentation.

Checklist: Am I prepared?
❏ I like my topic and am an expert in this area.
❏ I know when I will be presenting.
❏ I have timed my presentation.
❏ I have checked out any equipment that I need to use.
❏ I have an alternate plan in case the technology is not reliable.
❏ I have anticipated questions from my audience.
❏ I have practised answering questions.
❏ I have considered and added all possible sources of information.
❏ I have interesting, clear and easy-to-read visuals.
❏ I have prepared handouts.
❏ I have considered how to involve my audience.
❏ I have an effective conclusion.
❏ I show respect for the ideas of others.
❏ I have practised my oral presentation.
❏ I have practised making eye contact.

Chapter 11: How Do I Teach Phase 6—Evaluating?

Skills and Strategies	• Evaluating product • Evaluating inquiry process and inquiry plan • Reviewing and revising personal inquiry model • Transferring learning to new situations/beyond school	Reflecting on the process

Key outcomes

Students will:
- understand the evaluation criteria for the inquiry
- evaluate their own inquiry process, using established criteria
- provide constructive feedback to their peers, using established criteria
- reflect on similarities/differences in this inquiry compared to other inquiries in the past
- reflect on learning styles and how they influence the inquiry process
- reflect on the successes and challenges of their experiences, and write/talk about what they have learned
- acknowledge the feelings that accompany this phase.

Building student skills for Evaluating

Prior to the activity, and in the context of classroom activities, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- reflect on their KWL charts and talk/write about the inquiry process and products
- read their personal journals and reflect on them
- read/write/draw a synthesis of their experience
- use a rubric and checklist to evaluate their products and process.

Teaching Evaluating

During and in the context of an inquiry activity, the teacher provides students with opportunities to:
- go back to the original brainstorming of ideas, questions and issues to examine the development of a focus
- examine how they paced themselves during the inquiry process by completing a flow chart
- evaluate the success of their inquiry process
- reflect on their interactions with others (e.g., peers, teachers, teacher–librarian, parents) and on how these interactions influenced new understandings and the inquiry process
- use the evaluation criteria developed in the Planning phase to edit their own work as well as the work of others in the class.

TIPS for Teachers: Evaluating
- Stick to predetermined evaluation criteria and processes.
- Evaluate the final product as part of the whole process.
- Use a separate rubric as an assessment instrument.
- Involve students in assessment.

Assessing Evaluating

In the context of classroom activities or an inquiry activity, the teacher can:
- assess the final creation based on criteria established in the Planning phase
- assess students' knowledge outcomes based on a test, rubric or some other performance/application activity
- assess students' skill and attitude outcomes based on a test, rubric or some performance/application activity
- assess students' ability to evaluate their peers' work based on the criteria set in the Planning phase
- have students write/talk about their inquiry process for this activity and about how they modified their original plan
- have students write/talk about their final creation and evaluate it in relation to their previous work and the work of others.

Thinking about Evaluating

In the Evaluating phase, the emphasis is on involving the students in the assessment of the process as well as the product of the research. The emphasis may be on assessing the students' understanding of the process or it may be on assessing the content. Evaluation need not be summative and need not emphasize the final product. Where the emphasis is on the final product, students may simply become more skillful in plagiarizing (McGregor, 1995).

Assessing the process may take the form of students creating a flow chart of their personal inquiry process. Another alternative is having students prepare a written or oral summary of what they have learned about the process, or what new understandings they have gained through the process. Having students write a letter to their parents can be a very effective way of having students identify and assess their own learning. Students who are mentored in metacognitive awareness show growth in both content knowledge and search strategies.

The inquiry process is active learning that plays a critical role in developing information-literate learners. Student achievement in information literacy may be assessed using the eight information literacy outcomes presented in Chapter 1. Indicators of these information literacy outcomes are provided in *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (Asselin, Branch & Oberg, 2003).

Gauge the feelings
Students feel relieved, either satisfied or dissatisfied, and want to reflect on their learnings about their feelings and their topic.

Sample Activity for Evaluating

Teach students the basics of a flow chart and how it assists in evaluating process and product. Have students draw a flow chart of their inquiry process. Encourage students to use pencil crayons and to depict the flow chart in a way that best describes their real experiences. The chart can be designed on 11 x 17 paper. Provide time for students to compare and contrast their flow charts.

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Chapter 12: Professional Growth

Research foundations of inquiry-based learning

In order for students to have rewarding experiences through inquiry-based learning activities, teachers need to provide instructional guidance that is affective as well as cognitive throughout the process. Teachers need to have a deep understanding of how learners experience the inquiry process and of how learning through investigation can be facilitated.

The Inquiry Model presented in this guide is a theory-based process model, grounded in research from the disciplines of education and of library and information studies. From education, comes learning theory, and from library and information studies, information-seeking behaviour theory. For example, from education research comes the knowledge that learners vary in the level of abstraction that they can handle, depending on their cognitive development and their prior knowledge and experience. From education also comes the constructivist concepts of learners actively building or constructing their knowledge and of learners experiencing changes in feelings as well as changes in thoughts as they use information. From library and information studies comes the knowledge that users of information progress through levels of question specificity, from vague notions of information need, to clearly defined needs or questions, and that users are more successful in the search process if they have a realistic understanding of the information system and of the information problem.

The process approach to inquiry emphasizes thinking about information and using information within a problem-solving perspective. What is considered exemplary school library instruction has evolved over the past thirty years: during the 1960s and 1970s, it was thought to be teaching about retrieval tools and using sources productively; in the 1980s, teaching effective search strategies was added; and today, the focus is on teaching a process approach to the use of these retrieval tools, sources and search strategies. The process approach does not discard the knowledge from earlier approaches, such as the knowledge of tools, sources and search strategies, but it does emphasize that this knowledge is to be developed within the teaching of thinking and problem solving. The process approach to inquiry goes beyond the locating of information to the interpreting of information, beyond the answering of a specific question to the seeking of evidence to shape a topic. It considers the process of a search for information as well as the product of the search. It calls for an awareness of the complexity of learning from information; that learning from information is not a routine or standardized task, and that it involves the affective as well as the cognitive domain.

Teachers need to reflect on the growing body of research related to inquiry learning, in order to improve instructional practice on an ongoing basis. Without a deep understanding of the process approach to inquiry, traditional practices, some of which push learners to "get to work" too early and prevent them from developing a personal perspective and motivation for learning through investigation, are likely to continue.

Constructivist learning theory

In the past two decades, process-based models of information literacy instruction have been developed in many parts of the world, including Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. However, the effective implementation of such models depends on teachers understanding that students vary in the level of abstraction that they can handle, that students are active learners building or constructing their understandings as they use information, and that students are experiencing changes in feelings as well as changes in thoughts as they use information. This approach to inquiry learning is based on constructivist learning theory. Constructivist learning theory supports a view of inquiry-based learning as an opportunity for students to experience learning through inquiry and problem solving, characterized by exploration and risk taking, by curiosity and motivation, by engagement in critical and creative thinking, and by connections with real-life situations and real audiences (AASL, 1999; Bush, 1998; Harada, 1998; Schroeder & Zarinnia, 2001).

Metacognition

Inquiry-based learning involves a cyclic process, with some steps being revisited from time to time as a result of new insights. For example, reflecting on the process is a critical element in helping students to understand research as a learning process and to develop their metacognitive abilities—both "thinking about thinking" and "thinking about feeling." Research on metacognition began in the 1920s. Metacognition encompasses all the thinking that we do to evaluate our own mental processes and to plan for appropriate use of these processes in order to meet the demands of the situation. Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge of person, task and strategy; that is, knowledge of one's capacity to learn, knowledge about the nature of what is to be learned, and knowledge about the actions that one can take to aid one's thinking (Flavell, 1979). However, it was not until the 1990s that researchers began investigating methods of helping students to develop their abilities to think about, evaluate and monitor their feelings. Thinking about feelings, or "emotional literacy" (Toben, 1997), or "emotional intelligence," can be defined as:

The ability to perceive, access, and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Slavoney & Sluyter, 1997).

Young students, in their first few years in school, for example, are less likely to have developed these metacognitive and emotional intelligence skills, but they can be helped to do so, within the limits of their intellectual and emotional maturation. Older students also need to be helped to understand their feelings as well as their thinking as they work through the information literacy process. McGregor (1994) found that even bright high school seniors in their 11th year in school needed assistance in learning to think about their thinking, while Loerke (1992) pointed out that graduate students may be unaware that feelings of confusion and frustration are a natural part of the inquiry process.
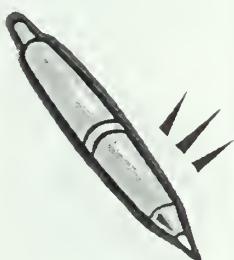
TIPS for Teachers: Metacognition
Students' personal growth and motivation to learn are enhanced when teachers:
- pose questions about thinking and feeling, and allow students to reflect upon their learning progress
- honour diverse learning styles and perspectives
- model the inquiry process on a consistent basis
- explicitly call the students' attention to the Inquiry Model and to the particular phase at which they are working
- review the inquiry process through class discussions, journal writing, setting timelines and ongoing and retrospective analyses of the data generated through such activities.

Leaders in inquiry-based learning

As pointed out throughout this guide, the Inquiry Model is based on more than 30 years of research from around the world. Some of the key researchers in the area of inquiry-based learning are featured here, each with a brief biographical note and several citations of their work.

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Chapter 13: Thinking Ahead

Implementing a process approach to inquiry often involves changes in classroom teaching and in the way our schools are organized for teaching and learning.

Teachers who are familiar with process models know that time and other pressures sometimes militate against implementing the model fully and know that sometimes aspects that are critical to the success of the process model are ignored. For example, one study of the *Focus on Research* model revealed that the implementation was hampered by limited understanding of the model, particularly in relation to the critical importance of reviewing the process with students (Holland, 1993).

Some of the common challenges experienced by teachers implementing a process approach to inquiry are cognitive overload, affective overload and time demands.

Cognitive overload

The process approach to inquiry can easily result in cognitive overload for students (and for their teachers!). One way to reduce cognitive overload is to ensure that students have a good background in the content area of the inquiry. An inquiry activity is usually more successful if it involves extending and applying familiar understandings, rather than addressing new understandings. Certainly, inquiry should provide opportunities for students to develop new understandings, but the level and sophistication of those new understandings will be enhanced if students begin with a broad background in the content area related to the inquiry.

Another way to reduce cognitive overload is to keep to a minimum the number of new process skills that are involved in the inquiry. The inquiry phases of Retrieving, Processing and Creating involve a multiplicity of skills and strategies. Teach no more than one new skill in each of these phases of an inquiry project. For example, in one inquiry project, students might be taught how to refine a database search by combining searches (using Boolean logic), how to use a retrieval chart to organize and collect information, and how to design an informational poster.

Reducing the number of new skills and strategies to be taught is important since it ensures that teachers have the time to provide the instruction and support essential for student success. Teach some of the skills and strategies that will be needed for an inquiry project in the classroom. For example, teach students how to use a database to find items by a particular author or to find information on a topic by using a single keyword. Teach them how to answer a fact-based question or to find an article to bring to class for discussion. Do these things on several occasions before students are taught how to combine searches as part of an inquiry project. Students might also develop and use a retrieval chart to help them process information from a familiar textbook, in preparation for using the same note-taking format to process information from many unfamiliar sources.

Reducing the range of choices that students might be given for creating and sharing their new knowledge also helps to make an inquiry process more manageable. If students are to be given choices of formats for processing, creating and/or sharing information, it is a good idea to have them choose from a range of familiar formats. If a new format is to be taught, it is usually better to expect all students to become proficient with the new format before offering it as a choice.

Affective overload

The process approach to inquiry emphasizes affective as well as cognitive aspects. The affective domain involves elements of pleasure, engagement, motivation, imagination, participation in community and acknowledgement of other voices. These elements provide the energy that keeps young people engaged in inquiry-based learning activities. Alienation from learning and from schooling often results from lack of recognition by the teacher of these elements.

The affective domain involves negative feelings as well as positive feelings. The process of learning something new, especially when that new learning challenges old understandings, is often accompanied by feelings of confusion, frustration and sometimes anger. Students need to be helped to recognize that the waves of optimism and frustration that accompany complex learning are natural (Kuhlthau, 1993). During inquiry projects that use problem-based approaches, emotional problems may increase since some students become anxious when facing problems that have no right answer, especially when the process of problem solving has only limited structure, and when multiple perspectives have to be taken into account (Schroeder & Zarinnia, 2001).

Students need to be aware of and have coping strategies to address the affective challenges of inquiry-based learning as well as such common phenomena as library anxiety and information overload. They need to recognize that all feelings, both positive and negative, are normal parts of learning. They need to understand them and to regulate them. Students who understand that their feelings are not unique but shared by others are less likely to be overwhelmed. The Reflecting component of the Inquiry Model gives many opportunities for helping students to acknowledge and understand the affective aspects of learning.

Time demands   The process approach to inquiry means a shift in the way we think about and use class time. More time is needed in the early phases of the process for exploration, for building content knowledge and for developing a personal interpretation or focus. This is time well invested in developing students' interest in and commitment to the topic being researched.

> Even very young researchers in Grades 1 and 2, given the opportunity for lengthy and rich exploration of a topic, can develop a clear understanding of the inquiry process and can produce unique and original final products. For example, one group of young researchers, investigating Insect Life, spent almost half of their research time in this early exploration phase, reading and talking about insects, hearing stories and singing songs about insects, watching videos about insects and going on a "bug walk" in the school yard. They were immersed in their topic, in ways that engaged both the affective and cognitive domains. Their interest and commitment to finding out about insects was deep enough to sustain them when they faced the challenges of finding answers to the questions that they had generated (Steeves, 1994).

Older students generally demonstrate more interest in their research topics if they have solid background knowledge in the topic area and if they can see the purpose of the research and its connection to their other school work (Garland,1995).

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